

Children to miss school as teachers across Scotland strike over pay

Children will miss lessons this week as teachers begin two days of national strike action.

Many schools around the country will be shut as members of the Educational Institute of [Scotland](#) (EIS) and [NASUWT](#) unions walk out on Tuesday and Wednesday over their long-running pay dispute.

It comes after EIS members took three days of “targeted” strike action in four areas represented by key politicians, including First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, last week and follows national strike action involving several unions in January and late last year.

However, members of the Scottish Secondary [Teachers Association](#) (SSTA) agreed to defer the industrial action planned for February 28 and March 1 in the expectation of an improved pay offer in the coming days.

A member survey found they would very marginally vote in favour of accepting the latest [Scottish Government](#) pay offer.

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The Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland (AHDS) also cancelled its planned participation in further strikes after a majority voted in favour of accepting the deal.

Under the latest offer announced by Scotland's Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville earlier this month, teachers earning up to £80,000 would have a 6% pay rise from April 2022, and then another 5.5% from the start of the 2023 financial year.

However, the NASUWT said its members are "determined" to continue with industrial action.

Dr Patrick Roach, NASUWT general secretary, said: "The decision of our members to reject the revised pay offer and continue with industrial action reflects the level of anger and frustration towards ministers and employers at their refusal to offer teachers a real-terms pay rise.

Members are determined and ready to continue to fight for a pay award that is worthy of their hard work and skills

"Teachers feel taken for granted by the Scottish Government and Cosla who seem to expect them to be satisfied with yet another year of pay erosion as their workloads become steadily more demanding.

"Three-quarters of members who responded to our consultative survey on the latest pay award expressed support for further industrial action to secure an improved pay offer.

"Members are determined and ready to continue to fight for a

pay award that is worthy of their hard work and skills.

“Ministers and employers should be clear of our members’ resolve and work with us to bring forward proposals to improve pay and working conditions that the profession can support.”

EIS General Secretary Andrea Bradley said, “EIS members remain absolutely resolute in their determination to secure a fair pay settlement from the Scottish Government and Cosla.

“This two-day national strike action is a further clear signal that Scotland’s teachers are not prepared to accept the deep real-terms pay cut that is being offered to them.

“Support for the ongoing programme of strike action remains very strong, with a growing number of teachers out on picket lines with each day of action.”

The Scottish Government has said the 10% increase that the EIS wants is unaffordable.

Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said: “The continuing disruption to children and young people’s education as a result of teacher strikes is completely unacceptable. Pupils in some areas are being hit particularly badly by targeted action, simply because of where they live.

“Five pay offers have now been put to the unions. The latest offer would have meant an 11.5% pay increase, or £5000, for most teachers in April, with a cumulative increase of almost 30% since January 2018. I am pleased that SSTA and AHDS members accepted the offer and have postponed strike action this week. The EIS rejected it outright, without even giving their members a chance to consider it. That is really disappointing and I am sure some members would have welcomed the chance to properly consider this latest offer.

“But the longer we make no progress, the more education is disrupted, particularly in the run up to the exam diet. This

really would be the worst possible outcome, particularly given the disruption pupils have already experienced as a result of the pandemic. And I know that no one – least of all teachers – want that.

“I have asked the teaching unions to resume pay talks urgently. I am offering meetings with the Deputy First Minister or myself each and every day this week, if necessary, to make progress on this. We are absolutely determined to do all we can to resolve this dispute and end this worry for children, young people, parents, carers, and teachers, too, who, I know, want to be back in the classroom.

“We have an opportunity this week to intensify discussions and negotiations to reach a settlement – and I hope the unions will recognise that and respond accordingly. It would be a great signal of their intent to suspend industrial action while these talks take place.”

The Education Secretary was asked about the potential impact on exams when she appeared on the BBC’s Good Morning Scotland show.

She said: “We are working to ensure that children and young people will be able to sit their exams, that the exam diet continues.

“It is deeply disappointing – I’ll be frank – to suggest as the EIS have done, to encourage their members not to sign up to mark children and young people’s papers.”